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9 March 1966

TO: Recipients of Executive Memorandum #154 dated 7 March 1966

**NSC REVIEW
COMPLETED,
06/26/2003**

President Johnson, at a Cabinet Meeting on 4 March 1966, described the background and thrust of NSAM 341. This paper sets forth the general lines of the President's comments and should be attached to your copy of NSAM 341.

NSAM 341 was approved and promulgated in connection with the conduct of interdepartmental U. S. Government work abroad. By the nature of the structure of the U. S. Government, no one below the President is vested with authority to give overall direction, coordination, and supervision to overseas interdepartmental activities which continue to grow more and more complex. Overseas the ambassador has this general authority, but in Washington there has never been an organization directly comparable to the ambassador and his country team specifically authorized to guide overseas interdepartmental work from Washington.

NSAM 341 is an outgrowth of the State of the Union message of 1966 in which the President stressed the importance of modernizing and streamlining the Executive Branch. With that purpose in mind with regard to overseas operations, General Maxwell Taylor was requested to review his experiences as ambassador in South Vietnam in integrating the activities of several departments and to examine the operations of our Government in Washington to see whether we were properly organized to cope with complex overseas operations not only in Vietnam but anywhere in the world where our interests are involved. The basic task was to integrate the programs of a number of departments in the most effective way to attain U. S. objectives in the country or region involved.

General Taylor, assisted by several interdepartmental committees, completed his review and submitted a report which the President approved. NSAM 341 is the result of this work.

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SECRET

- 2 -

There is nothing in the NSAM which changes the responsibilities of department and agency heads with regard to their own programs overseas or to their relations with the President. The NSAM merely sets up a mechanism through which every head of department or agency involved in overseas activities can participate effectively and in a timely manner in the formulation of decisions bearing on matters of common interest abroad. Any of these senior officials can carry an issue all the way to the President if he feels that a decision about to be taken is wrong. The President has instructed the Secretary of State to make it clear to the Executive Chairman of these interagency groups that they must arrange to invite participation by heads of departments or agencies who are not regular members whenever there are matters affecting them on the agenda of their interagency groups.

Arrangements provided by the NSAM are, in a sense, only clarifying, codifying, and regularizing good staff work. They are intended to be a help and a protection to all involved in the conduct of overseas responsibilities. The new arrangements are an important step in improving the conduct of our overseas business and all agencies and departments are asked to help the Secretary of State and the President in ensuring that the arrangements work.



L. K. White
Executive Director-Comptroller

O/ExDir/HKnoche:blp

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Excluded from automatic
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 2, 1966

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NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 341

TO : The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Administrator of the Agency for International Development
The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
The Director of the United States Information Agency

SUBJECT: The Direction, Coordination and Supervision of Interdepartmental Activities Overseas.

To assist me in carrying out my responsibilities for the conduct of foreign affairs, I have assigned to the Secretary of State authority and responsibility to the full extent permitted by law for the overall direction, coordination and supervision of interdepartmental activities of the United States Government overseas. Such activities do not include those of United States military forces operating in the field where such forces are under the command of a United States area military commander and such other military activities as I elect as Commander in Chief to conduct through military channels. The Secretary of State will discharge this authority and responsibility primarily through the Under Secretary of State and the regional Assistant Secretaries of State, who will be assisted by interdepartmental groups of which they will be executive chairmen, i.e., with full powers of decision on all matters within their purview, unless a member who does not concur requests the referral of a matter to the decision of the next higher authority.

Activities which are internal to the execution and administration of the approved programs of a single department or agency and which are not of such a nature as to affect significantly the overall U. S. overseas program in a country or region are not considered to be interdepartmental matters in the meaning of this NSAM. If disagreement arises at any echelon

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-2-

over whether a matter is interdepartmental or not in the meaning of this NSAM, the procedure set forth herein will be invoked which permits a dissenting department or agency to appeal from the decision of an executive chairman to the next higher authority.

1. The Senior Interdepartmental Group

To assist the Secretary of State in discharging his authority and responsibility for interdepartmental matters which cannot be dealt with adequately at lower levels or by present established procedures, including those of the Intelligence Community, the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) is established. The SIG shall consist of the Under Secretary of State, Executive Chairman, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the United States Information Agency, and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Representatives of other departments and agencies in responsibility for specific matters to be considered will attend on invitation by the Chairman.

The Senior Interdepartmental Group will assist the Secretary of State by:

- a. ensuring that important foreign policy problems requiring interdepartmental attention receive full, prompt and systematic consideration;
- b. dealing promptly with interdepartmental matters referred by the Assistant Secretaries of State or raised by any of its members, or, if such matters require higher level consideration, reporting them promptly to the Secretary of State for appropriate handling;
- c. assuring a proper selectivity of the areas and issues to which the United States Government applies its resources;
- d. carrying out the duties and responsibilities set forth in NSAM 124 and related subsequent NSAMs of the Special Group (counterinsurgency), which is hereby abolished; and
- e. conducting periodic surveys and checks to verify the adequacy and effectiveness of interdepartmental overseas programs and activities.

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-3-

The SIC will meet in the Department of State regularly and specially at the call of the Chairman. The Chairman will be supported by a full time staff of personnel furnished on his request by the departments and agencies represented on the SIC.

2. Interdepartmental Regional Groups

To assist the Assistant Secretaries of State, an Interdepartmental Regional Group (IRG) shall be established for each geographic region corresponding to the jurisdiction of the geographic bureaus in the Department of State. Each IRG shall be composed of the regional Assistant Secretary of State, Executive Chairman, and a designated representative from Defense, AID, CIA, the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, USAID and the White House or NSC staff. Representatives of other departments and agencies with responsibility for specific matters to be considered will attend on invitation by the Chairman. Meeting and staffing procedures will be patterned on the SIC.

The regional Assistant Secretaries, in their capacities as Executive Chairmen of the IRGs, will assure the adequacy of United States policy for the countries in their region and of the plans, programs, resources and performance for implementing that policy. They will be particularly watchful for indications of subversive aggression directed at the overthrow of governments in the region which the United States has a cogent interest to maintain, and, when such matters require higher level consideration, will recommend appropriate measures to higher authority for dealing with emergent critical situations in their regions.

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~~LIMITS~~ Specified by Secretary K. Smith

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by GENERAL TAYLOR
Aug, according to Sec. S.

Taylor, declassified ALMOST
VERBATIM by the President.

Comments on MACV-93 Prepared for President Johnson
for Use at the Cabinet Meeting, March 11

I have called you together today to inform you of a decision I have taken with regard to the manner of conducting our interdepartmental business overseas. As you know, by the nature of the structure of our government, there is no one below the President with authority to give overall direction, coordination and supervision to overseas interdepartmental activities which continue to grow more and more complex. Overseas, the Ambassador has this authority in a general way but, here in Washington, we have never had an organization directly comparable to the Ambassador and his Country Team specifically authorized to guide overseas interdepartmental business as this end.

As I indicated in my State of the Union message, I have been most anxious "to modernize and streamline the Executive Branch". With that purpose in mind with regard to overseas operations, I asked General Taylor following his return from Saigon to review the experience gained there in integrating the activities of several departments and to examine the operations of our government here to see whether we were properly organized to cope with complex overseas operations, not only in South Viet-Nam but anywhere in the world where our interests are involved. The basic problem seemed to me to be the difficulty of integrating the programs of a number of departments in the most effective way to attain the overall U.S. objectives in the country or region involved.

- 2 -

General Taylor, assisted by several interdepartmental committees, completed this review and submitted his report to me a few weeks ago. I have approved it and last Wednesday authorized the circulation of a National Security Action Memorandum implementing its principal recommendations. I would now like to ask General Taylor to explain the substance of the National Security Action Memorandum and give you some of the background which led to my decision.

(Break for General Taylor's presentation)

I want to emphasize further some of the points General Taylor has raised. First, there was nothing in this action which changes your responsibilities for your own programs overseas or your relations with me. As I view it, we are merely setting up a mechanism through which every head of department or agency involved in overseas activities can participate effectively and in a timely manner in the formulation of decisions bearing on matters of common interest abroad. Furthermore, these senior officials are provided a way whereby any one of them can carry an issue all the way to the President if he feels that a decision about to be taken is wrong. I have asked the Secretary of State to make it clear to the Executive Chairman of these Groups that they must be very careful to invite heads of departments or agencies who are not regular members whenever there are matters affecting them on the agenda of their Groups.

I do not feel that we are doing much more than clarifying relationships which have been obscured or should have been obscured in past governmental

- 3 -

practice. In a sense, we are only codifying and regularizing good staff work. I think it important to present the matter in this light to your own people, to the Congress and to the public. I look for you to see that your own people take the right view of these new procedures and understand that the latter are intended to be a help and a protection to them in the conduct of their overseas responsibilities. Also, I hope that you will talk to the key Congressmen on your committees and see that they, too, have a proper understanding of what is taking place. I feel that we are taking an important, if undramatic, step in improving the conduct of our overseas business and I ask you all to help the Secretary of State and me make it work.

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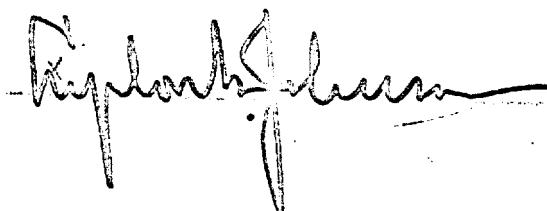
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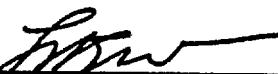
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Remarks:

Des:

The DCI requests that the essence of the attached paper, as well as NSAM 341, be made generally known both within Headquarters components and to our field stations.

LKW



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Executive Director-Comptroller

10 Mar 66

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